

To the Montgomery County Council, acting as the Board of Health:

COVID-19 came into our world in a whirlwind, first not taken seriously by the overwhelming majority until it hit our country, and now taken so far and above and beyond what is necessary.

Today, I am writing to you to give my personal testimony, thoughts, and perspective on the proposed Vaccine Passport in Montgomery County – a place I have purposely chosen to establish my life and home in. I am grateful for the right, the freedom, and the opportunity to share my testimony and have it fairly considered.

We do not know each other, but I am a person who believes in looking out for one another and loving my neighbor as myself. I am a person who has led a relatively normal and blessed life. I am a person who has experienced hardships and tragedies. I am a person who appreciates and benefits from science and medical advancements. I am a person who believes in the power of nature and natural healing. I am a person who believes in and has benefitted from western, conventional medicine as well as eastern and holistic medicine practices. I'm a person who has always respected the personal choices and freedoms of others, even when I didn't agree with it, and not forcing my own on them. I'm a person who has benefited from the law, and a person who has followed the law. You do not know me, nor I you, but just as you, I'm a human being with freedoms given by God, country, and state that cannot and should not be imposed on or revoked.

A Vaccine Passport infringes upon every single person's right and freedom, regardless of vaccination status, medical freedom, personal freedom and beliefs, moral beliefs, religious beliefs, etc. Strongly encouraging a person to subject themselves to medical care they do not wish to take is morally corrupt. Taking away rights and freedoms to encourage vaccination is manipulation under the guise of public safety. It is an attempt to increase a vaccination rate in an already highly vaccinated area. It's to increase a vaccination status that incidentally does not correlate to or provide complete immunity against or protection from a virus, as has been evidenced with the latest COVID-19 variant, Omicron. Ask anyone you know who has been partially or fully inoculated, and/or boosted, and came down with covid, such as Marc Elrich, Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger or even our governor, Larry Hogan.

I understand the desire for a Vaccine Passport, I do. I understand that a vaccine may limit the severity of the disease, but it's not a given, and it's not guaranteed to do so. I also understand that the County Council has said it is necessary to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and limit the pressure and number of cases on hospitals. But I reality that's not the motivation or goal. In the end a Vaccine Passport that requires vaccination to enter establishments will do more harm than good, to not only businesses but to freedoms of all kinds. It's a dangerous and slippery slope, one that we should not test.

I do not pretend to be an expert or know everything, and I do not have properly cited works, just general understandings and summations of what I've read from respected and widely

accepted media outlets, medical professionals who are also widely trusted, as well as personal experiences (my own and others).

What I do know is that the CDC and the Director herself cite that the “the overwhelming number of deaths, over 75%, occurred in people who had at least four comorbidities.” Adding that, “Really these are people who were unwell to begin with.” Comorbidities include diabetes, anxiety, depression, pregnancy, lung disease, liver disease, obesity, and other underlying conditions. Many of these conditions can be helped or mitigated by means other than vaccination. Means such as exercise, healthy eating, socialization, sun exposure, and other similar activities. It does not make sense at all to limit or deny entry or access to establishments that can aid in or help promote one’s health, such as health and fitness centers as well as even restaurants. Even entertainment venues and similar establishments can add value and health benefits (including mental health – which we can all agree is just as important), thus promoting and improving overall healthy lifestyles and even aid in the reversal of several of those comorbidities and the resulting severity of COVID cases.

Omicron, by admission of several official professionals and entities, is highly transmissible and vaccination status does not preclude anyone from contracting Omicron, whether mild or severe. Dr. Anthony Fauci himself has said "Omicron, with its extraordinary, unprecedented degree of efficiency of transmissibility, will ultimately find just about everybody." Again, ask your immediate and extended circle, who has been hit with COVID, whether it was the Delta, Omicron, or another variant, and if they were vaccinated.

And so, this proves that a vaccine does not appear to provide protection to every strain or variant, thus invalidating a need for a vaccine requirement to enter various establishments to prevent the spread. Because the vaccinated can still catch it and still spread it.

A new study found that the omicron variant creates fewer severe COVID-19 symptoms among patients, **including the unvaccinated**, Bloomberg reports. (The study was done by the Western Cape and South African National Departments of Health and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases in South Africa.) And historically speaking, viruses change and mutate over time and produce less severe strains and variants – which coincidentally we are seeing with Omicron. The first strain was the most severe, then came delta – less severe than the first, and now Omicron, the least severe currently, is present. We can only assume that the next variant will be even less severe.

Additionally, vaccination is not the only way to gain antibodies and protection. I wholeheartedly believe it is not even the best way either. Studies from northern European countries found that natural immunity is just as effective if not more so than vaccine antibodies. Pharmaceutical drugs are being worked on and developed to aid in our fight against COVID; natural immunity is also an effective way to gain protection, and so vaccination, let alone vaccine passports are not our only hope or option in this fight. We must consider and act upon all options and absolutely avoid taking away personal, medical, and religious freedoms and rights.

I genuinely believe in the freedom of choice, for everyone, without hatred or resentment towards opposing beliefs and opinions. So, I implore you, please protect all our rights and freedoms – yours and mine – do not require vaccination for entry. As Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Earl Stoddard said, “[...] there’s some individuality that has to be applied [...] . This is not a one size fits all recommendation.” While this was in reference to the new CDC quarantine guidelines, it also makes sense to apply it to this vaccine passport situation and your decision on it. Removing the rights for the few does nothing but embolden and increase the divide and may I be so bold, segregation. It is entirely unconstitutional to remove rights, deny access, and essentially force or strongly encourage citizens to take a vaccine that cannot prevent the spread of covid.

Another point I’d like to bring to your attention is that many other cities with a vaccine passport, such as NYC and SF, still saw their positivity rate soar, cases soar, and hospitalization rate increase. But as the winter surge is ending, all three metrics are dramatically trending downwards and are expected to continue to decrease back to low numbers. This current surge is not permanent. A vaccine passport will not prevent the spread of coronavirus. And we cannot live like this always, so let’s not even attempt to start unreasonable living conditions now.

Additionally, entire countries, let alone cities are now changing their approach to the coronavirus. They are changing their methods, their approach, and their messaging declaring that covid it is something that we will need to learn to live with, and possibly never eradicating it. So again, we cannot live this way forever. These other countries are now saying to treat covid more like the flu. Furthermore, their hospitalization rates as well as positive cases are also significantly decreasing as their wave of Omicron passes. Many countries in Europe as well as South Africa are ahead of us here in the US and Montgomery County in particular, where Omicron is concerned. They are our look into the future and if their positivity rate and hospitalization rate is decreasing, logically, we can expect the same thing here, thus once again invalidating the need for a passport.

It is disgusting and insanely discouraging to think those who have chosen not to be inoculated, will essentially be treated as second class citizens, and denied entry to certain establishments. It is a very slippery slope and eerily similar to killing Jews in the holocaust, to denying Jews membership into country clubs, it is one step away from requiring Blacks to drink from a different water fountain again or attend different schools, and so on and so forth. The vaccine passport is not truly about public safety, because if it were about that and the well-being of us all, there would be more guidelines and recommendations about overall healthy living and providing us with more options and more alternatives. Let us think logically about the far-reaching damage it will inevitably cause. Let us logically consider and understand that a vaccine passport will not decrease or slow the spread, because covid has reached and infected the vaccinated, it does not discriminate. So let us not discriminate either. A vaccine passport is discriminatory, unconstitutional and is a violation of all basic human rights: economic, social, cultural, civil, and political.

We do not know each other, but as a biracial woman with at least a couple comorbidities myself, I am a recovered COVID-19 person who did not put a strain on hospital staff and resources. I am a person who is entitled to all my human rights & freedoms. I am a person who does not deserve to have scare or manipulation tactics used against them that are ultimately to strongly encourage me to accept medical care that is not necessary to the health and/or longevity of my life.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony and I thank you in advance for fairly and equally considering it as a decision is made. And before I leave, I want to leave you with a few quotes to consider:

“Government exists to protect us from each other. Where government has gone beyond its limits is in deciding to protect us from ourselves.”

— Ronald Reagan

“Because to take away a man's freedom of choice, even his freedom to make the wrong choice, is to manipulate him as though he were a puppet and not a person.”

— Madeline L'Engle

“You cannot hinder someone's free will, that's the first law of the Universe, no matter what the decision.”

— E.A. Bucchianeri, Brushstrokes of a Gadfly

Victoris Jung